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WHAT A LIBRARY COMMISSION WILL DO FOR KENTUCKY

An address before the
KENTUCKY EDUCATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
at
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By

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Educational Advancement in Kentucky

will probably be marked in the next few years. One of the most effective methods of furthering this development will be the establishment of a library commission with the following functions:

1) Foster the development of libraries in general.
2) Assist communities desiring to establish libraries.
3) Aid in improving existing libraries.
4) Conduct a system of traveling libraries.
5) Provide a clearing house for duplicates.
6) Promote inter-library exchanges.

Books and Business

are close companions when once they become well acquainted with one another. This is specially true in our case, because it is our business to make books. In order to show the high character of our work we have printed this pamphlet and invite you to examine it critically and to visit our library bindery, which is the largest in the country.

The Kentucky Book Manufacturing Company
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WHAT A LIBRARY COMMISSION WILL DO FOR KENTUCKY

Text: "The best reading for the largest number at the least cost." Theme: What a library commission will do for Kentucky. Plan: By showing what such commissions are doing in other states to emphasize the need and value of one in this state.

A league of library commissions was formed five years ago. The year book of this league for 1908 outlines fully the organization and work in each state and gives "a complete directory of commission workers." It contains a wealth of information which will repay thorough examination.

This year book tells us that the first commission was established in Massachusetts in 1890; since then the idea has spread rapidly over the entire country until now there are 33 states where such commissions exist. Of these eight states are in the South, namely Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. The three last mentioned and Illinois and Utah created commissions this year.

This particular kind of legislation is one of the distinctive landmarks of progress. From time immemorial man has made his records, at first crude and costly; then came the invention of printing, followed by a long line of other inventions, until now processes have been so perfected that the great dailies give us for a few pennies the news from every quarter of the globe on the day of the deed. Indeed it seems almost impossible for an act, a word or a thought of consequence to escape the record. It is this habit of recording their achievements in various forms that has enabled successive generations of men to take up work where it was laid down by their predecessors and thus to extend the line of progress farther and farther. In this way the printed page has become the most potent factor of civilization, be it in the form of the single sheet, the magazine or the bound volume. It is the cumulation, preservation and circulation of these volumes that has produced the modern library system.

To the millions of volumes already published a few of the leading nations are adding over 50,000 new volumes a year. In the face of these facts it seems a pity that any citizen should be in want of books to read or that any community should be without a library. My purpose is to show what the state may do to supply this want. Permit me first to outline what is being done in 33 other states. The Commission Year Book gives full information on this subject, the most important points of which may be grouped under five heads:

1) Advisory work. 2) Organizing work. 3) Building plans. 4) Instruction. 5) Traveling libraries.

1 Advisory Work

In most cases the demand for assistance is so great that the commissions are kept busy responding to calls. In other cases they take the initiative for the purpose of arousing communities to a consideration of their needs and possibilities and directing them toward the establishment of libraries. They keep in close touch with library conditions in every part of the state. They call attention to and explain the law under which municipal libraries may be established and they encourage all cities and towns to take advantage of the law. They advise as to the best method of procedure. They do much by correspondence. When desirable a representative goes to the community which is agitating the library question, counsels with those in charge of the local campaign, furnishes literature for the press and for distribution, delivers addresses at clubs and public meetings and in every proper way assists in having the question intelligently and fairly presented for consideration by the voters or by the municipal authorities. Failure to secure favorable consideration is frequently due to misunderstanding or misrepresentation. At the proper time the question should be put squarely before every city and town for acceptance or rejection.

In libraries already established they confer with librarians and trustees regarding methods of work, and plans for development, the selecting and cataloging of books, methods of advertising and popularizing the library, in short regarding any question of library administration looking toward the greatest efficiency and the best results. They give assistance to old libraries introducing modern methods.

2 Organizing Work

After it has been decided to establish a library help is given in organizing the board of control and in providing plans for a building and furnishings. It is a popular error to suppose that the first and most important thing is a library building. It is frequently best for the building to come last. Sometimes the most effective way of securing a building is for a time to maintain a free library on a small scale in temporary quarters through voluntary contributions until its value is demonstrated. The experience thus obtained is of the greatest value to trustees in planning a new building and forming a permanent organization.

In this work they should profit by the experience of others who have wrestled with these problems and have learned certain things only through costly experiments. Of special value is assistance on technical matters such as classifying and cataloging books and the most approved method of keeping various records. Some of the commissions on request send a trained organizer to new libraries just beginning, who works with the local librarian for several weeks or more, giving instruction and helping the library to start right.

3 Building Plans

But when a building is to be erected, it should be the best that can be obtained for the money, suitably arranged for convenient and economic service as well as for handsome appearance. Some very unfortunate mistakes have been made by those who have ignored the experience of others. The Indiana "commission has a collection of photographs and floor plans of several hundred library buildings. They have proved of great value to architects and library boards and a decided improvement has resulted in library construction in towns where the plans have been loaned. In addition to plans of buildings the commission has a small collection of blue print drawings showing dimensions and construction of shelving, newspaper and periodical racks, etc." Good inexpensive furniture has been made from these blue prints and used until there was sufficient money available to purchase the best library furniture in the market. The assistance a commission may give in the erection of a single building may be worth the entire cost of the commission for several years.

4 Instruction

The amount and method of instruction varies in different states from a few hours interview in the local library to a full two year course in a regular library shool. Considerable instruction is also given by correspondence. Summer library school courses of about six weeks are regularly conducted by more than a dozen states. These admit only those who are already engaged in library work and desire to improve themselves or are under definite appointment to library positions for which they wish to prepare.

A number of states hold library institutes annually in various parts of the state; these bring together the librarians in a given section and stimulate their efforts through discussion of problems and a comparison of ways and means. Institutions and individuals have thus been brought into helpful relations toward one another. In some states the commissions have been instrumental in having brief courses of instruction introduced into the normal schools whereby teachers, present and prospective, are familiarized with some of the more important features of library work. Through each and all of these different agencies correct ideas are disseminated, ideals enlarged and the general standard of efficiency improved.

5 Traveling Libraries

Traveling libraries constitute the most generally accepted and economical form of state aid to libraries. A traveling library is a small box of 25 or more books which are loaned in a given place for a limited time, at the expiration of which they are returned to headquarters or sent elsewhere. They are designed 1) to supply an immediate need in localities which can not support libraries of their own and 2) to develop a desire for permanent local libraries. They also come to the aid of "struggling libraries with limited funds" and of schools with longings for something more than text books. There are at present 25 states with traveling library systems aggregating over 400,000 volumes. They have grown to be a very popular form of popular education. They may be divided into two classes, miscellaneous collections and special collections.

1) General, or miscellaneous collections. These are libraries for general reading, whose purpose is to provide free libraries for communities which have no such institution. These libraries go to the general pub-

lic in villages or towns or to any grange, post, lodge or farmers' club or to individual families in the country, to schools or to other state, county and municipal institutions.

2) Libraries on special subjects selected to meet the needs of applicants. These go to reading circles and study clubs in towns or in the country, to teachers and pupils in village or rural schools. They are even sent to individuals who are interested in some particular line of study, but who do not have access to a library. In some cases clubs pursuing definite lines of study may have books purchased specially to suit their program, which is prepared in advance with this understanding.

Traveling Libraries of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs

Although Kentucky as a state has never done anything for traveling libraries, these have existed here for 13 years under the management of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. Berea College has also maintained some for several years. The following account of the federation libraries is taken from this year's report of Miss Fannie C. Rawson, Chairman of the Traveling Library Committee:

"In June 1896 through an appeal from a missionary the attention of the Women's Federation was called to the peculiar need of the people in the eastern section of the state. We were told of children who had never seen a picture book, of districts whose only reading matter was a few necessary school books, of communities where even a newspaper seldom entered.

As an experiment six cases of books were placed in as many small mountain towns. From the beginning the library was received with interest, and as the work became better known the demand for the books grew at an astonishing rate. Urgent calls came from people throughout the mountains. Teachers, preachers, doctors, merchants, postmasters and private citizens offered their services as librarians. The libraries grew in number as rapidly as the funds permitted, and it was not long before the work ceased to be an experiment and became a recognized educational force in the territory which it covers.

There are now 94 cases of books, each containing about 60 volumes, or a total of about 5,800 volumes. The work is entirely voluntary and is supported by an annual contribution of 10 cents per capita from the members of the Kentucky Federation, all of which is spent for cases and transportation. The cases are supplied with books through the personal gifts of the club members.

Each case contains one-third stories for children, one-third fiction for adults and one-third history, biography, travel, nature studies, useful arts and poetry, a dictionary and a Bible. These little libraries are scattered all through the eastern portion of the state, at county seats, and small mountain towns, in isolated homes and out-of-the-way places, in lumber and mining camps, in post-offices, schools and churches, everywhere furnishing not only mental stimulus but also employment and entertainment, the best protection against the enforced idle hours of a dreary mountain winter. The reports of these libraries speak eloquently of their great value.

They are circulated now in 29 countries and are confined entirely to the eastern section of the state, for which the supply however is totally inadequate. In the western section, where the demand for books, if not the need, is far greater, there is no traveling library system whatever and no prospect of one until the state takes the matter in hand."

In 16 states now having traveling libraries supported by the state they were first established by women's clubs and maintained by them until the state recognized their value and assumed control over them. The women of Kentucky were among the first to take up this important educational work, but the state has so far failed to take the next step and do its share. Thirteen years ago these progressive women saw a need and they have been struggling ever since to supply it. The time has now arrived for the state to come forward like a man and do its duty by these women, and do its duty by its own citizens, who are entitled to this educational advantage which has been so thoroughly tried in every section of the country. That the appetite which these women have whetted is greater than they can satisfy is a tribute to the effectiveness of their efforts, a tribute to the natural desires and aspirations of the people. These women have done a wonderful work, but they

have only touched the borderland of library possibilities. The greater portion of the state has still to learn the value of traveling libraries and their various lines of usefulness as outlined in a previous paragraph. A great field of opportunity lies here waiting for the strong arm of the state to undertake its development.

Popular Education

Our system of popular education is complete in its outline. It begins with the kindergarten and extends through the grades to the high school and thence to the college and the university. It is a magnificent ideal to hold before the ambitious student. Fortunate indeed is the man or woman who has the opportunity and the perseverance to complete such a course. But how very few reach the college or the university. What a small proportion get through the high school, and alas the great majority never finish the grades. According to the report of the Commissioner of Education the average amount of schooling per inhabitant in the United States is less than five and one-half years. This means that the great mass of pupils have only a bowing acquaintance with the three R's when they leave school either voluntarily or because they are forced by economic conditions to become breadwinners.

What happens then? Their development does not stop, but it is impaired. The state however does little or nothing further for them, while it makes liberal provision for the comparatively few who remain in school. Is this fair to the individual or wise from the standpoint of the state? Is it good public policy? In a democracy the laws express "the combined political will of the people." The government will represent the intelligence and ideals of the average citizen; it will be no stronger and no better. The supreme importance of education is therefore apparent not only for the good of the citizen, but also for the stability of the state. But if that education is limited to five and one-half years it can not produce a strong citizenship or strengthen the state itself.

Continuous Education

Recently stress has been laid on what is termed "continuous education." It should not be necessary for the systematic education of the average person to be confined to a half dozen years in school, or even for that of a graduate to stop when he receives his diploma. Education is a life-long process. It is a continuous

development from the cradle to the grave. Only a small part of it takes place in the schools; and yet their function is most important, even if they do nothing more than start the individual in the race of life.

But there is hope even if he learns only to read and write. The ability to read is an equipment that will enable any one with energy and determination to educate himself. Ex-President Eliot has aroused much interest in his plan to select from the great books of the world enough to fill five feet of shelving. He says that the faithful and considerate reading of these books for 15 minutes a day "will give any man the essentials of a liberal education."

The most ardent advocate could not have spoken a finer word for the free public library. The great need of a larger measure of liberal education and training is everywhere in evidence. Witness the constant struggle for the improvement of our regular schools, for more of them and for longer terms. Witness the popularity of summer and vacation schools, of night schools, of trade and correspondence schools, all testifying to the demand for popular education.

Growth of Libraries

Ladies and gentlemen, as a contribution to the solution of this problem it is my privilege to present for your consideration the free public library. We are assured that five feet of books may furnish anyone the essentials of a liberal education; this from the dean of American educators after 40 years of experience as president of Harvard University. Andrew Carnegie considers free public libraries the best agencies for improving the masses of the people. He calls them "the cradles of triumphant democracy." The strength of his conviction can be measured by his marvelous donations, numbering 1,800 library buildings and costing $51,596,903.00. Last year 32 of the largest cities in the United States expended for regular library maintenance $4,185,828.00. Much of the most valuable work done by libraries can not be recorded, and yet the records show that in these 32 cities during a single year the circulation of books among the people reached the enormous number of 32,445,334 volumes. We have already seen that 32 states have not only established libraries for the benefit of the state officials but they have also created library commissions to assist in bringing books to all the people. The United States

Government is setting a worthy example in the Library of Congress. In the last ten years its organization and work has been greatly enlarged and improved and its usefulness extended to small libraries in every corner of the country, making it truly the Library of the Nation.

Thus we see how far reaching are the conquests of the free library idea in the city, the state and the nation. We see how private and public purses are being opened and their contents poured forth to establish and maintain libraries. We see that in theory and in practice the free library is a power in the life of today.

The Library and the School

Although there is this general appreciation of the library, it should appeal with peculiar force to those who teach, because of the insight, the outlook and the uplift it gives to them personally as well as the larger knowledge, interest and enthusiasm it brings to their pupils. There is a saying that the librarian who reads is lost. It may be added that the teacher who does not read has probably never found himself and the pupil who is confined entirely to his text books will often find them "stale, flat and unprofitable."

"At first," writes one teacher, "I regarded the idea of library work in the school room with suspicion. It seemed to promise only an additional burden to be feared by teacher and pupil alike. But things are different now. The library books are our most welcome visitors. They have brought new life into the school room, and they appeal even to the bad boy. Instead of adding to our troubles they have lightened our labors and multiplied their results."

Although this letter is a kind of minority report, it is a strong testimonial to the value of co-operation between the library and the school. With the great body of teachers this principle finds a ready response. They realize that the library and the school are the complements of each other; that they are both integral parts of a complete system of popular education and must work together in harmony. This relation now obtains where the most effective work is being done.

But this relation can not exist where libraries are lacking. There are only about 20 cities and towns in Kentucky with free circulating libraries. In these days we hear much of educational needs, of better school buildings and longer terms. Well and good. But we

need also libraries which will keep up the good work all the year round. We need not only teachers and text books and training for the boys and girls at school but also library books that will enable them and their fathers and mothers to continue their education at home through life.

The Kentucky Library Commission as soon as it is created should begin at once a systematic campaign for obtaining complete and correct reports from every community in the state as to whether it has a library and of what kind, whether it is free or subscription, whether it belongs to an institution, to a private citizen or to the public and whether it is alive or dead. If the community has no library, why not, and what are the prospects? Do the people want a library and are they working for it?

What this library commission should do for Kentucky may be summarized as follows:

1) Foster the development of libraries in general.
2) Aid communities desiring to establish libraries.
3) Aid in improving existing libraries.
4) Provide a clearing house for periodicals and duplicates and promote inter-library exchanges.

5) Arrange for the distribution of national, state and municipal public documents.

6. Conduct a system of traveling libraries.

Only a Library Commission can do this work properly and see that the state stands well and is correctly represented. When the census of 1910 is published Kentucky should be included in the commission column to show that her educational progress has kept pace with her commercial development. This commission should not rest until free books are brought within reach of every citizen, whether he lives in the city or in the country, and until there is a free library in every city and town in the commonwealth.

Thus looking forward we may join in the vision of Milton: Methinks I see in my mind's eye a noble and puissant commonwealth rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle muing her mighty youth and purging herself for flight in the radiant light of a new day.

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